UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr.
GENERAL

CRC/C/SR.730
5 October 2001

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 730th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 28 September 2001, at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

CONTENTS

GENERAL DISCUSSION ON "VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN WITHIN THE FAMILY AND IN SCHOOLS" (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.01-44954 (E) 041001 051001

The meeting was called to order at 5.25 p.m.

GENERAL DISCUSSION ON "VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN WITHIN THE FAMILY AND IN SCHOOLS" (agenda item 6) (continued)

First draft of possible recommendations on violence against children within the family; first draft of possible recommendations on violence against children in schools (documents without a symbol distributed in the meeting room in English only)

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited the two working groups established at the preceding meeting to report on their deliberations.

2. Mr. KYDD (Resource person for Working Group I: Violence against Children within the Family) said that the discussion of Working Group I had been extremely productive and drew attention to changes in the first draft of possible recommendations on violence against children within the family. An addition should be made to section (1) to indicate that the proposed study on the protection of children against violence should include the concerns mentioned in sections (2) to (27) of the draft. The Working Group also considered it important to make specific mention in the recommendations of the European Convention on Human Right, the European Court of Human Right and regional human rights instruments, as well as a reference to the Special Rapporteur on Harmful Traditional Practices. The Working Group further recommended that all States parties should be urged to repeal, as a matter of urgency, any legislation that allowed violence to be used within the family as a form of discipline, including corporal punishment, however light.

3. With regard to awareness raising, sensitization and training, Working Group I believed that the term "zero-tolerance" in section (11) should not be used in the Committee recommendations because of the negative connotations associated with the term. Consideration should be given to the notion of raising awareness of non-violent forms of discipline and to promotion of non-violent forms of entertainment and media. The media had a responsibility to prevent the use of images promoting violence, sexual exploitation and other forms of harm to children.

4. The Committee should encourage a more integrated, multisectoral approach to the prevention of violence against children within the family. The public health sector should become more involved and should contribute to studies carried out on the issue. The Committee should also encourage non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to devote increased attention to reducing violence against children; preference should be given to the form of intervention that was least intrusive for the family. NGOs should support States parties in their efforts to ensure that the views of the child were taken into account in public debates and policy-making activities. It was also important to consider trade unions as relevant parties. Children should be involved in the design of all mechanisms used to prevent violence against children within the family.

5. With regard to prevention strategies, the Committee should promote the rehabilitation of perpetrators of abuse, and attention should be drawn to the prevention of recurring abuse. On the issue of monitoring mechanisms, urgent attention should be given to ensuring the establishment

and effective functioning of systems to report and to investigate cases of suspected ill-treatment of children. Health professionals, teachers and all those who interacted with children should be involved in the process of reporting cases of abuse. It was important that children should be given direct access to complaints mechanisms and provided with adequate support when defending their own rights.

6. With regard to follow-up and monitoring, research should be conducted into social attitudes towards punishment to facilitate acceptance of alternative forms of punishment. Efforts should also be made to improve understanding of the hidden social and economic costs of violence against children. Plans of action should include not only regional and international initiatives, but also local ones, as grass-roots support for activities to prevent violence was critical. Adequate resources should also be allocated to detection. Finally, the net of protection which the Committee wanted to create for children should extend to professionals who sought to assist children, as they were often vulnerable to attacks when doing their job.

7. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee would discuss the Working Group's recommendations during its session, and would no doubt continue its practice of adopting the recommendations at the end of the session with only minor changes.

8. Mr. RAJANI (Resource person for Working Group II: Violence against Children in Schools) said that Working Group II had prepared a set of guiding principles, aimed primarily at teachers, for action on issues relating to violence against children. First, all action should be based on an alternative vision of schools and other learning establishments whereby the rights, dignity and safety of all were respected, rather than punitive measures. Second, violence was unacceptable under any circumstances, and the action to stop it should include consideration of different contexts and should fully engage local actors. Third, children must be meaningfully involved in conceptualizing and strategizing action on violence against children. Fourth, the link between communities and schools needed to be strengthened, and fifth, action must be based on a holistic approach and must emphasize non-tolerance of all forms of violence. He added that measures to prevent violence should also take gender into account: the forms of violence used against girls were different from those used against boys.

9. At international level, it was important to recognize that collective action, for example through the Global Movement for Children, was generally more productive than individual action. At national level, legislative reform was critical, but action such as awareness-raising and public engagement should not be neglected. Public engagement was not a matter of preaching, but a complex process that involved the stimulation of public debate and the construction of a new strategy at both community and national level.

10. Concerning awareness-raising, sensitization and training, Working Group II agreed with Working Group I that an alternative term to "zero-tolerance" should be found.

11. With regard to monitoring, complaint mechanisms, investigations and sanctions, it was important to strengthen mechanisms, particularly at community level, to allow children, parents and teachers to take appropriate steps when cases of violence occurred, and to ensure that information about the procedures was widely available.

12. Children's rights, which were often considered to be a marginal concern, must be made a central priority for States parties. In that connection, the issue of violence at schools was closely linked to that of resources. Explicit reference was made to the commitment made at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, that no country with a credible plan to improve basic education should fail to do so because of a lack of resources. The Committee was urged to reiterate that commitment in its statement.

13. Ms. KARP (Rapporteur) said that violence against children was a violation of their human rights and of their dignity and had negative consequences on their development. In the words of Ms. Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights, measures that were unacceptable forms of behaviour when applied to adults should be similarly unacceptable when applied to children. The day's discussion had been positive and had focused on ways of implementing a workable, sustainable and effective strategy to protect children against violence, in line with the new vision of the inter-relationship between children and adults which informed the Convention. The challenges were part of a process of empowerment, whereby children would learn about and become involved in implementing their rights. Parents, teachers and society at large should learn about non-violent methods of disciplining children. Once society had agreed that violence against children was unacceptable, campaigns against other forms of violence would become easier.

14. The CHAIRPERSON thanked all those who had participated in the general discussion, and said that the Committee would study very closely the recommendations submitted by the working groups.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.